

# CHAPTER 11

## PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM

### Background:

A diversion program can only be as good as its public information or outreach program. An effective public information program will realize two goals:

- ◆ provide adequate advertisement of the debris collection program; and
- ◆ educate the residents and contractors involved in carrying out the program.

Unless this program is taken seriously and resources applied to implement it, plans to recycle and otherwise divert the disaster debris may go unrealized.

### STEPS TO TAKE

#### Suggested steps:

Based on the experiences of other local jurisdictions that have undertaken disaster recovery programs, following are some suggestions in establishing your public information/outreach program.



#### STEP 1:

Establish a public information or media center to handle debris management questions from the public.

- ◆ cleanup instructions,
- ◆ status of cleanup,
- ◆ respond to public inquiries,
- ◆ locations of dropoff or collection sites,
- ◆ how to source separate,
- ◆ enforce provisions against illegal dumping, and
- ◆ complaints re debris piles or illegal dumping via geographic information system (GIS).

Consider setting up a mobile information center.

## Public Information Program

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- ☐ **STEP 2:** Develop contact list for the media: television, radio, cable access, ham operators, newspapers, neighborhood newsletters.
- ☐ **STEP 3:** Set up a hotline for the public to call regarding debris management programs and/or for debris pickup.
- ☐ **STEP 4:** The Public Information Officer (PIO) will coordinate with the office or department implementing the debris management program to inform the public and contractors how to use the program and to provide updates.

Use all media--print (newspaper, doorhangers), TV (national, local, cable), radio, speakers. Also consider coordinating with the waste haulers to advertise the programs since they will be the ones in the field performing the actual collection. They may be able to deliver notices door-to-door. Also check with the California Conservation Corps and their ability perform these functions.

The PIO may be responsible for hosting the media and visitors at the disaster area.
- ☐ **STEP 5:** Advertise recycling/diversion programs for the disaster debris: point of collection, hours, materials to be collected, method of collection--drop-off, curbside, bins, etc.
- ☐ **STEP 6:** Identify all target groups, particularly those Non-English speaking groups, and the geographical areas where they reside.

State Office of Emergency Services (OES) can provide maps of the local area depicting where different languages are spoken and the approximate number of non-English speakers).

☐ **STEP 7:** Determine need for interpreters and translators based upon above.

☐ **STEP 8::** Provide fact sheets to the public in English and major non-English languages in the area. Fact sheets on solid waste will be one type that will likely be developed.

Examples include: how to handle household hazardous waste; what to do with disaster debris; guidelines for participating in debris collection programs, etc.

☐ **STEP 9:** Structure a public information campaign so that messages reach target groups at home, at work, and at leisure.

☐ **STEP 10:** Jurisdictions may wish to develop a Public Information Mutual Aid Plan such as the one adopted by San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties. Contact the nearest OES Regional Office for more information.

**Example:** Take into account that changes in policies and programs may well affect your diversion program. The City of Los Angeles used the Good Year Blimp in July, 1995 to advertise to City residents that the earthquake pickup program was over.

This was an innovative approach to getting the word out to the public except for the fact that FEMA subsequently extended the debris program for six months, and the City had to "undo" its creative advertising.

**Regional cooperation:**

Costs for advertising in the media can be prohibitive, yet using the media is the best way to notify as many residents as possible of the diversion programs and how to participate in them.

The City of Los Angeles was quoted a price of \$16,000 for a 1/4 page ad in the *Los Angeles Times* to advertise their earthquake pickup program. The City of Santa Clarita was

also implementing a curbside pickup program, and the *L.A. Times* was the primary paper their residents read.

As it was Santa Clarita residents followed the instructions in the *Times* for the City of Los Angeles programs, thinking that they applied to them. Had the two cities been able to combine their efforts and advertise together, not only would they have saved money, but there would have been less confusion about the two curbside programs.